much gusto, perhaps written a little piece for the student newspaper, with the mysterious title: "Nothing is that is Not." But this was not the end of the episode.

About two years later, while riding on the top of a double-decker bus in London, I noticed a familiar face half turned toward the street. It triggered immediate recall. I slid across the aisle and sat next to the person. "Shalom, Alex!" I greeted him in Hebrew. "*Ma Nishma*, what's new?" His head jerked from the window toward me, eyes blinking with recognition. "Pfefferkorn! It's Pfefferkorn," he uttered, surprise written all over his face. "What you doing here?" he asked. Acting out a secret agent role that I had picked up from the movies, I glanced sideways at our surroundings, supposedly making sure that no one was eavesdropping, dropped my voice to a whisper and, ever so slowly, lingering on each vowel and stressing every consonant, I said: "I'm shadowing you." His face cracked into a broad smile. I would have liked to chat some more with Alex, perhaps ask him what status my file was now, but he got off at the next stop, wishing me *"Kol Tuv*," all the best. I hope his departure was not on my account.

The Lure of the London Stage

After graduating from Bar-Ilan, I went to London in 1965 to study linguistics. This field was all the rage at the time in academia. At parties and in the university cafeterias, professors of literature and languages discussed the subject over coffee while puffing pipes, leaving trails of smoke in their wake. Academics have the skills to engage in earnest discussion on a topic with an appearance of expertise after having read an article or two on the subject. Modern linguistics took on a life of its own. I was intrigued by this new field, the excitement of its discovery, and its intricate methodology, which afforded insights into the way languages work. I broached the subject with Fisch. Unlike his colleagues, he did not pretend to know much about linguistics, yet he was quite receptive to the idea. By this point, my wife and I had a five-year-old, Vered, so relocating to London even for one year was complicated. We pulled together our resources and, with Bar-Ilan's support, we set out for England.

The course, entitled "Systematic-Functional Linguistics," and headed by professor Michael Halliday, drew students from the European and American continents. There were also some Englishmen returning from the British Commonwealth to their homeland in the wake of growing nationalism in the countries they had immigrated to decades earlier. It was an interesting group

of people, and their mix of cultures and languages generated stimulating discussions that allowed for observation of the function of languages in a social context. The subject interested me, the group of students was engaging, and Professor Halliday was stimulating. I was, however, distracted by the allure of the London stage. While studying the Elizabethan and particularly the Jacobean plays under Fisch's tutelage, I would stage the plays in question in my imagination, construct the props, and arrange the entrances and exits of the characters. But the performances that I saw in London transcended the limits of my imagination. The gracious ease with which the actors moved on the stage, their melodious diction, enchanted me. Cutting-edge technology allowed the directors wider freedom in interpreting the play, as it was influenced by contemporary scholarship. Consequently, they transported the tempo of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods onto the stage, giving them a modern perspective and yet being careful not to tamper with their authenticity.

While studying seventeenth-century plays with Fisch, I had intuited similarities between the plays' characteristics and the concentration camps' traits. Now watching the performances on stage, where the words were fleshed out and the characters became tangible, my intuition assumed a cerebral clarity. I saw with deeper lucidity the crossover of human behaviour from conventional society to the concentration camp environment. If the dynamics of the Jacobean drama intimated a siege environment, the Theatre of the Absurd evoked a semblance of the Holocaust.

The Theatre of the Absurd made its presence felt on the London stage in the fifties and sixties, with lasting effect on dramaturgy. One of its striking components was the severance between cause and effect — behaviour does not yield expected results. Precisely. This phenomenon plagued the ghetto resident and particularly the concentration camp inmate, and now I saw that it also appeared in the Theatre of the Absurd. Language was divorced from ambience. Thus, for example, Pinter's characters drink water and talk liquor lingo heard in pubs. Likewise, in Ionesco's plays, synchronization between word and action collapses amid farce in the shuffle of the chairs. These cognitive dissonances are fuelled by a crafted irrationality that moves in circles rather than leading to a resolution. The cumulative effect created by this dynamic was that of weariness and anxiety in anticipation of something happening that does not happen. It is as if the characters' faculties acted separately from and against each other.

Watching the performances from the security of my theatre seat, I experienced a sensation similar to that of having a nightmare. I was ejected

into wakefulness, and memory started reeling out the nightmare images. The purposelessness, the ennui, the unpredictability, and the hovering threat — these haunting remembrances melded with the drama unfolding on stage. The malignity driving the Jacobean theatre, and its unshod absurdity, reinforced my dark vision of humanity. Strangely enough, I could watch the ferocity of the Jacobean theatre with some measure of dispassion, but I could not always distance myself when viewing the work of some of the Absurdist playwrights — Pinter, to mention one dramatist of many. The drama taking place on the stage was too close to home.

Doubts began nagging at me: did my observations, filtered through a dark prism, have validity, or were they subjective impressions derived from abnormal historical circumstances? Would an informed theatre audience see the resemblance between the Jacobean theatre and the Theatre of the Absurd? Furthermore, would they see that these two dramatic genres, drawn from a common humanity, were linked, though tangentially, to the human condition? Partial answers to these questions I found out later.

Humouring the Jewish Agency

Meanwhile, I pursued Linguistics but invested my greatest energies into formulating my Master's thesis. I thought that establishing a sensibility link between the Jacobean and the Absurdist dramas was challenging enough without the intrusion of the Holocaust. I was short of time and money — two commodities whose absences had been the bane of my existence. Since making time *ex nihilo* is the purview of the Almighty, I felt that it was my obligation, as the family provider, to find additional income. I landed a part-time job at the Youth Department of the Jewish Agency. "Your responsibilities are to raise Zionist consciousness," pronounced my prospective employer from behind his large desk. His tone and mannerism were those of a public speaker. It did not take much time to identify the type, prevalent in Israel.

A political hack who failed to get elected to the Knesset, Moshe Gilboa had been given the position of Youth Director in the U.K. by the ruling party until a vacancy was made in the Knesset. What I understood by "raising Zionist consciousness" was "convincing Jewish youth of the correctness of the Zionist cause." This I tried to do two to three times a week, mostly in the East End London Jewish clubs. I would show films about Israel, play Israeli songs, and tell stories about the country. The teenagers preferred darts, billiards and ping-pong games to education about Israel.